## Important Information Regarding Funding For 800 Megahertz Radio Project from the Erie County Fire Advisory Board

The Erie County Fire Advisory Board passed a resolution at its meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup> requesting Governor Pataki, Senate Majority Leader Bruno, Assembly Speaker Silver and the entire local state delegation to support a permanent and dedicated source of funding to upgrade emergency radio communications in New York State.

The resolution pointed out that in 2002 estimates of revenues generated by the State Wireless Service Surcharge projected approximately \$60 million which resulted in a statewide distribution of \$20 million (33% of the collected funds) to local governments to fund radio upgrade projects. In Erie County, the money received has been committed by County Executive Giambra to provide seed money for the new 800 Megahertz radio system. It was recently learned that *this amount will be reduced to \$10 million statewide for fiscal years 2003-04 and 2004-05* and furthermore, *the current legislation only authorizes distribution of these funds through 2005*.

In 2002, New York State raised the wireless service surcharge to \$1.20 on all wireless telephones with the intent of improving public safety communications throughout New York State. This increase will result in a 70% increase in wireless surcharge revenues amounting to over \$100 million annually,

It is critical that funds raised by the State Wireless Surcharge be used for projects that it was intended to benefit. Therefore, the resolution adopted by the Fire Advisory Board calls upon New York State, and our state representatives, to support maintaining the 2002 distribution percentage of 33% of the total surcharge. In addition, the resolution supports the efforts of the Western Region Public Safety Communications Alliance (which Erie County member of) which calls on New York State and our representatives to *make permanent the 33% of the wireless surcharge received being returned to local governments* to offset costs associated with upgrading, operating and maintaining wireless public safety answering points and dispatching of public safety providers in response to wireless 911 calls.

This resolution was sent to Governor Pataki, the leaders of the legislative houses and our local state representatives. However, it is imperative that all emergency service organizations in Western New York make this message be heard loud and clear to our representatives if we hope to make this funding permanent.

Therefore, the Fire Advisory Board is recommending that all fire service organizations and departments adopt this resolution and send copies to our state representatives in order to make our voices and intentions heard.

Attached to this e-mail is a copy of the resolution adopted by the Fire Advisory Board and a sample resolution that can be used. Also attached is a list of addresses of the Governor, state legislative leaders and our local delegation that copies of the resolution should be sent to. Even if your organization doesn't adopt the resolution, we are suggesting that letters supporting efforts to make the 33% distribution of funds permanent be sent to the entire list of representatives. *Make your voice be heard*.

In closing, it cannot be stressed enough that everyone's assistance in this is needed if we want make sure funding is permanent, and at appropriate levels, to improve the radio system in Erie County. If you have any questions or need more information, please feel free to contact John Wicka who is on the Legislation sub-committee of the Fire Advisory Board. He can be reached at 627-9506 or 863-3756.